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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 001199

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TAGS: [EFIN](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [QA](#) [SN](#)  
SUBJECT: QATAR LOOKS EAST TO SINGAPORE AS A MODEL FOR  
SECURITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael A. Ratney, for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Government of Qatar (GOQ) has over the past two years been building a strong, strategic relationship with the Government of Singapore (GOS), particularly in the areas of security and economic development. Both small, prosperous states surrounded by much larger neighbors, the two countries have much in common. Qatar clearly admires Singapore's approach of placing economic development ahead of democratic development. End Summary.

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Qatar-Singapore Comparison  
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¶2. (SBU) The State of Qatar and the Republic of Singapore have many factors in common. Both are virtually small island states situated on important seafaring trade routes. Neither are true democracies: political power in Qatar is concentrated in the ruling Al Thani monarchy, and in Singapore in the People's Action Party (PAP). Qatar and Singapore are relatively young countries, both previously under British rule with Singapore gaining independence in 1965 and Qatar in 1971. Both have strained relationships with their closest neighbors; both are members of the Non-Aligned Movement, but strive to play a role on the regional and international stage. Both countries enjoy a high per capita GDP and are looking abroad for investment. Qatar recently enacted a strict traffic law and, while not yet banning chewing gum, has recently cracked down on spitting in public. Qatar is looking to learn from Singapore's experience in these areas and Singapore, in return, is striving to ensure a stable supply of gas and oil and to increase its investments in Qatar and the region.

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Strategic Relationship: A Chronology  
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¶3. (SBU) While it is believed that Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani has long looked toward Singapore as a model of development, the strategic relationship between the two countries has greatly strengthened since 2005 in the areas of internal security, economics, and information technology. The following are examples of this strengthening relationship:

- The Amir conducts a State visit to Singapore to meet with Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew. (June 2006)

- Singapore's Minister of Foreign Affairs visits the Qatar Foundation in Doha. (June 2006)

- A gala dinner was hosted at the Grand Hyatt in Singapore for an audience representing top dignitaries from Singapore and Qatar representing the government, banking, and business sectors. (August 2006)

- Minister Mentor of Singapore travels to Qatar to meet with the Amir to discuss economic development. Qatar expresses interest in becoming an economic hub in region and wants to learn from Singapore's experience and know-how. (January 2006)
- First meeting of the Qatar-Singapore High-Level Joint Committee (HLJC) was held in Doha. (October 2006)
- Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Wong Kan Seng led a delegation to Doha to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for security cooperation between the Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs and the Qatar Ministry of the Interior. (October 2006)
- In response to the huge potential for business opportunities, as well as growing interest from Singapore companies to do business in Qatar, the GOS announces it is in the process of establishing a diplomatic mission in Doha. The mission is intended to help advance projects identified by both countries, as well as to offer assistance to the growing group of Singaporeans in Qatar. (November 2006)
- A second MOU between the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) and the Supreme Council for Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR) for project cooperation was signed by the Singapore Prime Minister and the Qatar Heir Apparent Sheikh Tamim. (November 2006)
- Yousef Hussein Kamal, Qatar's Minister of Economy and Commerce, traveled to Singapore December 21-22 for talks with Lim Hng Kiang, the Singapore Minister for Trade and Industry,

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- and Brigadier General George Yeo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in an effort to boost bilateral cooperation and discuss a planned free trade agreement (FTA) between the two countries. (December 2006)
- An agreement between Qatar and Singapore on avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion was enacted. (December 2006)
  - In order to increase its presence in the Qatari market, especially in the oil and gas sector in which it sees huge opportunities in the support services field, a delegation from Singapore visited Qatar every three months for over a year seeking partnerships in a variety of fields, including the hotels and tourism sector. (June 2006-07)
  - An MOU was signed in Singapore to advance legal co-operation between the two countries. Qatar's Attorney General Ali bin Fetais Al-Marri and his Singaporean counterpart Chao Hick Thin signed on behalf of their governments. (August 2007)
  - The Second Joint Working Committee Meeting on Security Cooperation between Qatar and Singapore was held in Doha. It was co-chaired by Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister of State for Home Affairs and Law, Singapore, and Sheikh Abdulla Bin Nasser Al Thani, Qatari Minister of State for Interior Affairs. The Joint Working Committee discussed the expansion of training activities in the areas of police investigation and airport security, and a new cooperative effort involving the secondment of Singapore officers to the Qatar Ministry of Interior. Two information technology (IT) engineers from Singapore, it was agreed, would advise the Qatari Minister of State on IT-related strategic and planning matters as well as assist in the border clearance and immigration processing systems. The Joint Working Committee also agreed to enhance cooperation in the areas of internal security, law enforcement, civil defense, border control, and immigration. (September 2007)

- The Heir Apparent led a high-level Qatari delegation to Singapore for the second meeting of the Qatar-Singapore High-Level Joint Committee (HLJC). Topics included security, the environment, finance and business. The countries signed seven MOUs and agreements regarding product standards; information, communications and technology; the establishment of a USD one billion civil defense training institute in Qatar modeled after the Singapore Civil Defense Academy; mutual recognition of certificates in maritime issues for seafarers; commercial and technical cooperation; and cooperation between chambers of commerce. The Qatar Public Works Authority (Ashghal) also awarded a tender for the design, building, operation and maintenance of the largest wastewater treatment plant in Qatar to Keppel Seghers Engineering of Singapore. (September 2007)

- A Qatari delegation headed by the Heir Apparent visited the office of the Port of Singapore Authority during its visit to Singapore. Singapore Trade and Industry Minister Lim Hwee Hua welcomed the Heir Apparent and the accompanying delegation at the port. (October 2007)

- The Heir Apparent received Singapore Minister of Information, Communication and Arts Dr. Lee Boon Yang. (November 2007)

- A Qatar-Singapore e-Government Forum was held in Doha. The forum was centered on building an advanced e-government capability and harnessing the Singapore experience for Qatar's ICT market. (November 2007)

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Comment  
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14. (C) Qatar is looking to Singapore as a model of security and economic development rather than to its more traditional allies in the Gulf and the larger Arab World. The GOQ apparently views the Singapore experience as one to be emulated. The most important aspect of this bilateral relationship appears to center around internal security procedures and training of internal security forces. At the same time, however, Qatar clearly admires the Singaporean model of pursuing economic prosperity for its citizens before launching down the road of democratic development.  
RATNEY